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ABSTRACT

Having broadly defined the process of curriculum formation as a complex set of interactions among many specified internal and external factors, the authors review the field of curriculum theory with the goal of finding the most potent theory for structuring and guiding studies of how changes occur in the curriculum of American public schools. For the purposes of analysis, curriculum theory is organized into four categories according to the theorists who view curriculum development as (1) a technical process performed by professionals, (2) a field to be studied inductively, (3) a product of the interaction of various individuals and groups, and (4) a concept to be re-conceptualized. After considering the merits of using the theories comprising these four categories, the authors discuss the worth of an eclectic theory combining elements of the first three categories. The authors advocate use of Paul Peterson's theory of educational decision making as a basis upon which to construct an eclectic theory. They suggest that such an eclectic theory would serve as a "worthy" conceptual framework for organizing data and unifying scholarly consideration of the process of curriculum formation. (Author/LH)

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TOWARD SYSTEMATIC STUDY OF THE PROCESS OF CURRICULUM FORMATION: WHAT THEORY IS OF MOST WORTH

By Steven Baruch and Rolland Callaway

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1. Curriculum development as a technical process performed by professionals.
2. Curriculum as a field to be studied inductively.
3. Curriculum as a product of the interaction of various individuals and groups, and
4. Curriculum as a concept to be re-conceptualized.

After considering the merits of utilizing the theories comprising these four categories, the authors discuss the worth of an eclectic theory combining elements of the first three categories listed above. The author's advocate use of Paul Peterson's theory of educational decision making as a basis upon which to construct an eclectic theory. They suggest that such an eclectic theory would serve as a "worthy" conceptual framework for organizing data and unifying scholarly consideration of the process of curriculum formation.

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Toward Systematic Study of the Process of Curriculum Formation: What Theory Is of Most Worth?

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This paper was developed with the objective of focusing theoretical consideration on the process of curriculum formation which is defined as including all of the internal and external factors which influence the formation of the curriculum in American schools. The process of curriculum formation includes the activities associated with the efforts of educational professionals such as curriculum development, curriculum construction, curriculum planning, curriculum engineering, curriculum design, etc. Moreover, the definition denotes that the process is affected by: 1) internal factors such as community interest groups, boards of education, administrators, teachers, and students, and 2) external factors such as governmental agencies, private testing companies, textbook publishers, and philanthropic foundations. It is also recognized that the process of curriculum formation is affected by the general social, economic and political forces of the time. Indeed, to some extent, one might say the curriculum is the product of crises.

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It is recognized at the outset that some may take issue with our broad designation of "the process of curriculum formation." However, this designation is part of the reason for developing the paper. Defining the process in broad terms allows us to consider all of the factors which may affect curriculum development and curriculum change.

The basic purpose of this paper is to examine the several categories of theories or models which have been proposed and utilized in the process of curriculum formation. As the title indicates, the authors raise the question, "What theory is of most worth?," with the intention of identifying which theory or combination of extant theories might serve as a framework for future studies of the process of curriculum formation. Thus, the paper is humbly presented as a purposeful review with the hope that it will provide impetus for further review and understanding of the curriculum of schools and the process of curriculum formation.

The authors recognize that extensive scholarly attention has been given to various aspects of the process of curriculum formation. However, in general there is a lack of coherence in the literature and the process is rarely viewed in terms of theory. Also, the various studies tend to focus on only one aspect and do not deal with the multiple factors which affect curriculum development and change. In addition, the studies are typically limited to a short time period and therefore do not account for the influence of changing social, political and intellectual forces--thus, essentially an ahistorical perspective.

The authors also recognize that there is no general consensus as to the meaning of many of the significant terms in the field. There is seemingly no agreement on the meaning of "curriculum" or "theory" and, not surprisingly, no agreement on the meaning of "curriculum theory" (McCrory, 1981). But this will not deter us.

Presently, curriculum theory is discussed from several perspectives depending, it seems, on the purpose of the theorizer. In order to provide an organization for the paper we have identified four perspectives for examination:

1. Curriculum development as a technical process performed by professional curriculum developers,
2. Curriculum as a field of study to be studied inductively,
3. Curriculum as a product of the interaction of various individuals and groups--both internal and external, and
4. Curriculum as a concept to be reconceptualized.

We propose to examine each of these perspectives in some detail. In light (or heat) of this review we speculate on how these various perspectives, separately or collectively, might be utilized to study the process of curriculum formation in a more systematic manner.

Curriculum Development as a Technical Process Performed by Professional Curriculum Developers

Throughout much of the 20th century, educators discussed the role of curriculum specialists. By the middle of the century, a consensus had developed that curriculum development was a specialized professional activity to be carried out according to prescribed

procedures. The process advocated by the majority of curriculum professionals is found in the work of such writers as Tyler (1949), Taba (1962), Anderson (1965), Saylor and Alexander (1974), and Smith, Stanley and Shores (1950).

Perhaps the most famous (or infamous) theory or model is that proposed by Tyler in his Basic Principles of Curriculum and Instruction (Tyler, 1949). Often referred to as "The Tyler Rationale," Tyler's work is predicated on the ideas of others in the field including the Herbartians, John Dewey, Harold Rugg, etc., etc., etc. Tanner notes that, "The development of knowledge in the curriclum field, like that of any profession, is incremental." She comments: "All of the essential elements in the 'Tyler Rationale' emerged from predecessor works, which constitute the history of the curriculum field. . ." (Tanner, 1982, p. 409).

The Tyler Rationale features four questions (with emphasis on the term "question"):

1. What educational purposes should the school seek to attain?

2. What educational experiences can be provided that are likely to attain these purposes?

3. How can these educational experiences be effectively organized?

4. How can we determine whether these purposes are being attained? (Tyler, 1949, p. 1)

The remainder of Tyler's book suggests methods for answering these questions and a rationale with which to examine problems of

curriculum and instruction. While latitude is left regarding which methods and procedures should be used, it is clear that curriclum development is a process involving the planning of educational goals and objectives, as well as ways of selecting and organizing them and evaluating whether goals and objectives are being effectively achieved. The Rationale provides a procedure for assuring that adequate data will be considered to provide an intelligent basis for choice of goals and objectives. Tyler advocated filtering objectives through philosophical and psychological screens so that the curriclum will be in accord with the philosophy of the school and consistent with educational psychological research regarding students. Thus, Tyler's rationale provides a "rational" approach for assuring that sound educational planning will guide curriculum development.

Other curriculum scholars have expressed their version of curriculum theory in slightly different terms, but by the middle of the 20th century a general consensus had developed regarding curriculum theory as a guideline for practice. Although theorists such as Taba (1962) or Smith, Stanley and Shores (1950) have differed somewhat in emphasis, their general approach closely parallels that of Tyler. Thus, Tyler's analytic model continues as a generally accepted theory when that term is used in the sense of providing an analytical model for guiding curriculum development activities.

Gay (1980) has noted that curriculum theory may also be used as a "perceptual screen through which practice is interpreted and ordered" (p. 121). While agreeing with Tyler's conception of the generic

components of curriculum construction, Gay points out that the Tyler rationale is an analytic model and that no one set of prescriptive guidelines will be acceptable to all specialists. Gay identifies four models of the curriculum planning process: the academic model, the experiential model, the technical model and the pragmatic model. Gay views curriculum practitioners as utilizing an eclectic approach which can turn "the potential chaos of conflicting demands, needs, and interests of different constituent groups into reasonable, manageable instructional plans" (p. 121).

Short (1983) has defined curriculum development strategy according to the locale of curriculum development including the participants and different conceptions of the realities of the setting. Utilizing these categories, Short identified three strategies: 1) generic/scholar-dominated/implementaion as directed, which features subject area specialists developing a product which is subsequently disseminated; 2) generic/mileaus-expert dominated/limited adaptation, which features an agency outside a school district generating a curriculum which may be adopted, within limitations imposed by the developers in several settings external to the agency; and 3) site-specific/balance-coordinated pattern/open adaptation, which features curriculum development in an actual educational setting where the products of curriculum development will be utilized with the school district. Short then assesses the relative merits of these strategies in terms of their practicality, purposefulness, realism and judiciousness. Using these criteria he concludes that each strategy has strengths and weaknesses.

Scholarly analysis of the relative effectiveness and usefulness of various prescriptive techniques continues among theorizers utilizing theory as a guideline for practice. These deliberations occur within the theoretical borders of Tyler's model.

Inductive Approaches

Goodlad (1979) is prominent among those who propose studies of actual curriculum practice as part of a process of gathering data which would inductively lead to the development of curriculum theory. According to Goodlad, theory will emerge when enough data is available upon which to base generalizations. Tyler's rationale would be an appropriate vehicle for guiding research if Tyler's four questions were slightly rephrased to read:

1. What educational purposes does the educational institution seek to attain?

2. What educational experiences are provided to attain these purposes?

3. How are these educational experiences organized?

4. How is the attainment of these purposes or the value of these experiences being evaluated? (Goodlad, 1979, pp. 19-20)

This framework provides direction to researchers gathering data because it structures analysis around common elements in the process of curriculum formation. On the other hand, researchers are still left with the important problem of why certain curriculum decisions are made. The Tyler Rationale directed educators to filter decisions through psychological and philosophical screens whereby educators could analyze studies of learners, societal needs, and subject area

disciplines. In order to provide the information needed to clarify issues surrounding the process of curriculum formation, the same questions might be phrased:

1. What is the process by which educational institutions choose certain educational purposes?

2. Why are certain educational experiences chosen to attain these purposes?

3. What factors determine how these educational experiences are organized?

4. What use is made of curriculum evaluation in determining how the curriculum will be changed?

Goodlad and Richter (1966) had previously recognized the need to modify Tyler's model in that they delineated three levels at which the process of curriculum formation occurred: the societal level, the institutional level, and the personal level. Moreover, in preparing a model to guide their extensive study of educational practice, Goodlad and his associates withdrew from what was termed a "production model" (Goodlad, Sirotnik and Overman, 1979, p. 174), and expanded the earlier conceptualization to include five perspectives of curriculum, namely: "ideal curriculum," "formal curriculum," "instructional curriculum," "operational curriculum" and "experiential curriclum" (Klein, Tye and Wright, 1979, p. 245). While these models provided analytical clarity in differentiating among the various levels at which the process of curriculum formation occurs, it still leaves unanswered specific questions regarding why and how curriculum

change occurs at each level. Indeed this question is not dealt with extensively in Goodlad's, A Place Called School (1983), where variations in curriculum and allocation of teachers are dismissed as an almost random by-product of assorted factors.

> They represent accretions of decisions made over the years: superintendent and board interpretations of hundreds of legislative bills, responses to local pressure groups, overreactions to current styles and fashions, immediate replacement of retiring teachers instead of responsive thinking about correcting imbalances and the like. The imbalances reflect, more than anything else, a general lack of systematic decision making in this area and of the data likely to suggest the problems and enlighten the decisions. (p. 137)

Goodlad goes on to characterize decision making as "crisis-prone" and "crisis-driven" and concluded that "curriculum matters, however significant, are rarely of crisis proportions. For over a decade they have taken second or third place to other things."

Goodlad's work exemplifies both the positive and negative potential of the qualitative research generally associated with the inductive approach to the curriculum formation. According to Rogers (1984) qualitative researchers begin with a hunch, which is translated into hypotheses in the course of observation. Generalizable theory emerges from the study of specific settings. Qualitative research is producing quantities of seemingly important data and Goodlad, for one, has

indicated how this information might be used to generate recommendations for practice. It is not clear, however, whether theory has, or will, emerge from this inductive process.

Heretofore, Goodlad's analysis of data has not tended to focus extensively on the process whereby curriculum changes are made. Goodlad's data has been useful in clarifying actual practice in his five "perspectives" of curriculum. However, while analytically separating these perspectives, questions regarding the process by which curricular policy and practices change, remain to be addressed in terms of theory. While insights have emerged, they have as yet not been organized in a coherent theoretical framework.

The Process of Curriculum Formation Conceptualized as a Product of Interaction among Various Individuals, Groups, Internal and External Factors

Writers such as Kirst and Walker (1971), Wirt (1977), Boyd (1979) and Cuban (1979) have focused attention on the variety of individuals, groups, internal and external factors interacting to influence curriculum policy formation and subsequent curriculum development activities. Kirst and Walker (1971) cited at least four value orientations upon which curriculum policy could be based--tradition, community, science and individual judgment. Because all four value bases have adherents, they contend that the process of curriculum formation is a product of the give and take between adherents to various value positions. Because policy makers have to be responsive to various constituencies, Krist and Walker characterize curriculum change as a slow, incremental process which accelerates in response

to crisis situations and/or external mandates. Boyd (1979) maintained that change is strongly influenced by a cadre of government officials and foundation employees whose livelihood depends on promoting changes in curriculum policy. Walker (1975) has also contended that external factors are extremely powerful influences on the process of curriculum formation at the local level. Because local curriculum specialists lack adequate time to formulate major changes, Walker characterizes them as "gatekeepers" who selectively encourage proposals for curriculum innovations formulated elsewhere. While the points of view of Kirst and Walker and Boyd have merit, we lack the data necessary to definitively document the extent to which they accurately describe the reality of the process of curriculum formation. A variety of questions remain unanswered such as:

1. Is the Tyler Rationale actually used in everyday curriculum planning?

2. What internal and external factors influence the process of curriculum formation?

3. How has the process of curriculum formation been influenced by changing social, economic, political and intellectual trends?

Consideration of these questions has been hampered by a lack of adequate research strategies and data. A number of studies have been carried out, but there is no consistency or coherence. The process of curriculum formation has been studied in a variety of ways but generally focusing on a particular curricular issue or on the effects of a particular trend or change in one school setting (Franklin, 1982; McKinney & Westbury, 1975; Reese, 1981). The

available data indicate that regional and local differences considerably influence the extent to which approaches advocated by curriculum professionals (Tyler, 1984) were actually implemented in local school districts (Franklin, 1984).

Wirt and Kirst (1972, 1975) attempt to get at these questions by using systems theory to construct a model of the process of curriculum formation. These authors considered the process of curriculum formation in terms of societal input, a political conversion system, and societal feedback. Used in this manner, the systems model becomes a means of analytically separating and categorizing data. Wirt and Kirst did not intend to utilize systems theory as predictive theory, but rather wished to apply it in a heuristic fashion as a vehicle for organizing their "hunches" and generating a series of testable hypotheses. Thus, systems theory may provide a useful approach for generating hypotheses regarding the process of curriculum formation.

Walker (1971a) proposed a "Naturalistic Model" which he indicates represents the "most characteristic features of traditional educational practice" (p. 51). His model describes a process featuring three elements: the curriculum platform; the design; and the deliberation associated with it. The platform represents the system of beliefs and values which curriculum developers bring to their task, while deliberation is a process in which ends and means are seen as mutually determining each other. The design represents abstract relationships embodied in the creation of curriculum as opposed to the end product. Walker further subdivides the design into explicit and implicit components. The explicit design consists of all decisions made

with forethought and after consideration of alternatives. The implicit design is composed of those courses of action taken automatically without considering alternatives. While the implicit design was not comprised of overt decisions, Walker considered such judgments as having the same ultimate impact of overt decisions.

Walker perceived his model as an accurate description of the process of curriculum formation which he indicates often takes place in an emotional atmosphere. He maintained that decisions were influenced as much by personal preference as by rational discussion. Walker characterized curriculum developers as motivated by a desire for "justifiability" and "defensibility." By attempting to incorporate such elements as deliberation and the explicit design into his model, Walker believed he had accurately depicted aspects of the process of curriculum formation ignored by other theorists, and his analysis is useful in that it highlights the non-rational factors which influence the process. Walker's (1971b) study of curriculum formation projects substantiated his model.

Palmer (1976) also found that in crisis situations the expertise of curriculum specialists tended to be forgotten. Fry's (1976) survey indicated role confusion among curriclum directors in selected Illinois schools. These curriclum specialists felt they had to follow teacher opinions of what curriculum changes should be pursued. Shaffarzick's (1976) study of California school district officials indicated that they rarely used systematic methods such as needs assessments and comparative examination of contrasting methodology. Surprisingly,

Shaffarzick's data showed that in crisis situations, the California school systems which he studied were more likely to use systematic methodology when decisions required public scrutiny. Thus, Walker's Model does seem to identify characteristics reflective of real curriculum development practices. Unfortunately, Walker's model has not been extensively utilized either by him or other researchers. This situation may be due to a lack of analytical clarity in the elements of Walker's model which appears to have had its greatest impact by serving as a description of the realities of day to day curriculum development in some settings.

Peterson (1976) in his study School Politics Chicago Style constructed a model of educational decision making which was used by Baruch (1982) for analyzing the process of curriculum formation in a large urban school district. He describes four possible patterns of interaction in educational decision making depending on which people or groups were involved in a given situation. According to Peterson, an "Ideological Bargaining" pattern will be found when decision making is dominated by those committed to broad objectives. Such participants will become involved in a range of policy questions because they are typically seen to have interests going beyond particular issues. Individuals or groups involved in ideological bargaining might find the defeat of an opponent or proposal preferable to compromise. "Pluralist Bargaining" pertains to participants seeking a majority of votes in order to gain a victory on a given issue. In this instance, participants are more likely to compromise in order to gain an objective. Peterson described a third pattern, the "Unitary A,"

in which a governing body such as a board of education acts as the head of a large, complex formal organization. When the decision making process followed this pattern, the governing body is generally viewed as gathering information, considering alternatives, and eventually implementing policy through its bureaucratic organization. At such times, the governing body gives emphasis to information and recommendations made by the administrative staff. Peterson also describes a fourth pattern, the "Unitary B," under which the governing body also acts as a rational decision maker, but in a situation where the parameters of decision making are constrained by the common objectives of the governing body as well as a limited number of policy choices. In such a situation the governing body was seen to maximize its gains within the parameters of possible choices. For instance, a school board might wish to avoid desegregating, but is faced with the necessity to do so. It thus rationally chooses the most acceptable method of desegregating.

Peterson's model depicts a process of decision making which is not constant and varies depending on the factors affecting the process of curriculum formation. The Unitary A pattern pertains when political circumstance on the governing body and in the society composing its constituencies allows the expertise of professional staff members to control decision making. The other three patterns occur when decision making constraints are imposed by outside mandates, fiscal constraints, or political pressures. In such situations, Peterson's model describes a decision making process including such elements as political maneuvering, coalition formation, and group pressure.

Baruch's study (1982) of board-approved curriculum decision making from 1955-1976 cited Peterson's model as a useful explanatory conceptualization of the process of curriculum formation in one local district. Although Baruch's data indicated that the Unitary A pattern of decision making was most common, both the Pluralist Bargaining and the Unitary B patterns of decision making had a significant impact on the process of curriculum formation in a large school system. Beginning in 1967, the Pluralist Bargaining and Unitary B patterns became more prevalent when community groups and board members began to propose curricular changes.

Peterson's theory seems to be broad enough to encompass the variety of situations involved in analyzing the process of curriculum formation while narrowing the number of patterns to four. His conceptualization appears to be useful for those scholars and practitioners wishing to study the combined influence of the wide variety of factors influencing the process of curriculum formation. The model appears to be particularly useful in analyzing board level curriculum policy formation. When professionals dominate decision making, the Unitary A model, in-depth studies of the prescriptive methods used by curriculum specialists and the decision making approaches of teachers must be carried on to provide a full description of the process of curriculum formation. However, Peterson's conceptualization appears to be a most useful tool for providing a general picture of a process which is at times dominated by decision making patterns involving a variety of internal and external factors.

The Process of Curriculum Formation Conceptualized as a Concept to be Reconceptualized

The Reconceptualists (whoever they are) seem to be united by a common purpose of attempting to conceptualize curriculum in novel ways and moving away from traditional approaches to curriculum theorizing. At least two distinct postures have been identified within the Reconceptualist group--an existentialist position and a structuralist position (Benham, 1977). The existential Reconceptualist posture is exemplified by Pinar (1975), who characterized Reconceptualists as rejecting the body of classroom behavior or decision making in favor of a focus on matters of transcendence and consciousness. The existential Reconceptualists have been concerned with the individual who experiences the curriculum. For instance, Greene (1975) viewed students as the makers of their own curriculum including the necessary interaction with and guidance from teachers. Structural Reconceptualists tend to be more politically oriented and primarily concerned with the political acts necessary to transform educational realities. Thus, to Apple (1975), political socialization was a key curriculum concern, and Mann (1975) used criticism as a method of sensitizing practitioners to the political dimensions of curriculum. According to Bateman (in Benham, 1977), the important common denominator is the raising of critical questions and opening up new ways of thinking.

Eisner (1981) characterizes the work of the Reconceptualists as "meta-theoretical." As such, their work focuses on the type of

thinking needed to "reconceptualize" the curriculum. Consideration is given to matters such as bridging the gap between theory and practice (Reid, 1979) although some of the Reconceptualists have proclaimed that this is a matter for others to worry about. Freire (in Benham, 1977) discusses "middle range" theory as attempts to find bridges between theory and practice. He views theory building as a process built upon direct observation of reality. At this time, theory building in the sense discussed by other curriculum theorists does not appear to be a main thrust of at least some of the Reconceptualists, although the naturalistic/qualitative research methodology advocated by some curricularists does provide at least one common element. Thus, the work of the Reconceptualists may be described as re-defining and providing a creative re-analysis of the concept of curriculum. In the future, this work may lead to theory of the type previously discussed, but in our view a coherent theoretical thrust has not emerged.

What Theory Is of Most Worth?

From the preceding discussion of four categories of theories, we are now obliged to deal with the question of what theory is of most worth. Basically, our answer is none of them and all of them. The "none of them" position is grounded in the obvious contributions that the theorists of all perspectives are making toward advancing our understanding of the process of curriculum formation. The "all of them" position may seem to be diametrically opposite, but only if the four categories identified are viewed as dealing with different

phenomena. In fact, we view each category of theory as contributing valuable insights from different perspectives. Viewed in this manner, then, the case for an eclectic approach emerges and gains credence.

First, we do believe there is a need to consider the process of curriculum formation in an analytical manner and to pose basic questions a la Tyler. Certainly, many deliberations concerning curriculum ought to be rational (if not necessarily linear) and carried out by curriculum experts--the professionals.

A major emphasis of our so-called inductive theorists has been an emphasis on gathering data about "practice"--an emphasis which has gained momentum since Schwab (1970) called for study of "the practical" and Goodlad's (1983) emphasis on developing a data base. The development of naturalistic and qualitative research methodology is an important ingredient in this perspective. The inductive approach calls for the gathering of data from observations of practice--an important aspect of an eclectic approach.

The third category of theory and theorists--emphasizing the importance of group interaction--i.e., "politics"--adds another important ingredient. For example, Baruch's study (1982) indicates that the political interaction involved in the process of curriculum formation does not necessarily follow an analytic, systematic approach. Moreover, at times it involves a far wider audience than curriculum professionals. Although it may be analytically useful to separate policy formation from professional deliberation, to do so distorts the impact of group interaction among a variety of factors and

influences. This position merely asserts that in certain contexts and at various times the deliberation of curriculum professionals may not be the major determinant of the curriculum.

As a consequence of our study and deliberation, we recommend consolidated efforts toward the development of an eclectic theory. Such a theory would allow the efforts of theorists to coalesce and focus on the study of similar research questions. Essentially, this would be a form of reconceptualization of curriculum and curriculum theory. However, the adoption of such a "conceptualization" would not obviate subsequent conceptual changes in light of data proving or disproving hypotheses.

From our review of the various theories and models, the work of Peterson emerges as an excellent candidate for the eclectic approach recommended. His analysis has proved helpful as a basis for guiding descriptive research on the process of curriculum formation. In providing a basic model of reality, it provides a framework for identifying research questions and research strategies. The model is "most worthy" of the attention of educational researchers and practitioners because it narrows the myriad of possible approaches to a "workable" four and does seem to serve the need for an eclectic approach. Using such an approach, we would hope to see more case studies which might further our understanding of the process of curriculum formation, thereby enhancing our capability of utilizing theory to elucidate practice.

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